

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently amended) A communications system for servicing customers connected to access points and using an established backhaul transport to an office comprising: one or more ~~environmentally hardened~~ remote digital subscriber line access multiplexers placed at locations away from said office to be close to said customers, connecting means for connecting said access multiplexers to said access points, and an alternate backhaul transport in parallel with said established backhaul transport for connecting said access multiplexers to provide broadband services to said customers.
2. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said access multiplexers are all-weather hardened for outdoor installation.
3. (Original) The communications system of Claim 2 wherein said access multiplexers are located in utility-pole mountable enclosures.
4. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said access multiplexers include a processor unit, an ATM assembler and disassembler unit and an ATM switch fabric.
5. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein each of said access multiplexers includes a master unit and one or more trunk interface units.
6. (Original) The communications system of Claim 5 wherein said master unit is in an all-weather hardened enclosure and said trunk interface units are each in separate all-weather hardened trunk interface enclosures.

7. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said alternate backhaul transport includes a network of ATM switches.

8. (Original) ~~The communications system of Claim 1~~ A communications system for servicing customers connected to access points and using an established backhaul transport to an office comprising:

one or more environmentally hardened remote digital subscriber line access multiplexers, connecting means for connecting said access multiplexers to said access points, and an alternate backhaul transport for connecting said access multiplexers to provide broadband services to said customers, wherein said alternate backhaul transport includes, a plurality of ATM switches connected by a plurality of first transports to form a first network,  
a plurality of second transports connecting said access multiplexers to form a second network, and  
a plurality of third transports connecting said second network to said first network.

9. (Original) The communications system of Claim 8 wherein said first transports, said second transports and said third transports are wireless.

10. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said alternate backhaul transport includes a network of ATM switches supervised by an element manager.

11. (Currently amended) The communications system of Claim ~~1~~ wherein 1 wherein said alternate backhaul transport includes ATM switches connected by transports in a mesh network.

12. (Original) The communications system of Claim 11 wherein said transports are wireless.

13. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said office is an ILEC central office.

14. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said alternate backhaul transport connects to a CLEC office.

15. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said alternate backhaul transport connects to other networks.

16. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said office is an ILEC central office and said alternate backhaul transport connects to a CLEC office.

17. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said office is an ILEC central office and said alternate backhaul transport connects to a CLEC office and to said ILEC central office.

18. (Original) The communications system of Claim 1 wherein said office is an ILEC central office and said alternate backhaul transport connects to a CLEC office, said ILEC central office and to other networks.

19. (Original) The communications system of Claim 18 wherein said other networks include the Internet.

20. (Original) A communications system for servicing customers connected to access points and using an established backhaul transport to an office comprising:

one or more all-weather environmentally hardened remote digital subscriber line access multiplexers in utility-pole mountable enclosures,

connecting means for connecting said access multiplexers to said access points,

an alternate backhaul transport for connecting said access multiplexers to provide broadband services to said customers wherein said alternate backhaul transport includes,

a plurality of ATM switches connected by a plurality of first wireless transports to form a first mesh network having redundant connections,

a plurality of second wireless transports connecting said access multiplexers to form a second mesh network having redundant connections,

a plurality of third wireless transports connecting said second network to said first network.

21. (Original) The communications system of Claim 20 wherein said office is an ILEC central office and said alternate backhaul transport connects to a CLEC office, said ILEC central office and to other networks.

22. (New) In a communications system having access points for connecting to customers and an established backhaul transport connecting said access points to an office, a method for providing broadband services to said customers comprising:

providing remote digital subscriber line access multiplexers at locations physically

remote from said office to be close to respective ones of said customers;

connecting said remote digital subscriber line access multiplexers to respective ones of said access points; and

operating an alternate backhaul transport in parallel with said established backhaul transport to connect said remote digital subscriber line access multiplexers to said office.

23. (New) The method of claim 22, wherein operating said alternate backhaul transport includes:

connecting a plurality of ATM switches by a plurality of first transports to form a first network;

connecting said remote digital subscriber line access multiplexers by a plurality of second transports to form a second network; and

providing a plurality of third transports to connect said second network to said first network.